

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 /062 W

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R 230510Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3571

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BG

SUBJ: MUJIB FIRES STATE MINISTER FOR CORRUPTION

1. ON JULY 21, THE OPENING DAY OF THE TRAINING COURSE FOR NEWLY APPOINTED DISTRICT GOVERNORS, SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN FIRED STATE MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS, NURUL ISLAM MANZOOR, BECAUSE OF "GRAVE CHARGES OF CORRUPTION." MANZOOR IS FIRST MINISTER OR POLICITICIAN OF ANY STATURE CHARGED WITH CORRUPTION PUBLICLY.

2. THE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC SECRETARY, DR. SATTAR, TOLD US SHORTLY BEFORE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AN UNNAMED STATE MINISTER WOULD BE SO FIRED AND THAT, IF AFTER A HEARING HE WERE FOUND GUILTY OF CORRUPTION, HE WOULD GO TO JAIL. SATTAR SAID THE CORRUPTION CHARGES INVOLVED CONSTRUCTION OF A HOUSE IN GULSHAN RESIDENTIAL AREA BEYOND MANZOOR'S NORMAL MEANS. HOWEVER, WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL GOOD SORCES ANOTHER VERSION OF THE EVENTS: IN BANGALEE TERMS, MANZOOR IS A VICTIM OF A "CONSPIRACY" IN STIGATED BY FLOOD CONTROL AND WATER DEVELOPMENT MINISTER ABDUR RAB SERNEABAT, BROTHER-IN-LAW OF MUJIB. SERNEABAT SUPPOSEDLY RESENTS THE POLITICAL POWER MANZOOR IS DEVELOPING IN BARISAL, THE HOME REGION OF BOTH MEN, AND HAS BEEN AFTER MUJIB FOR SOME TIME TO FIRE THE STATE MINISTER. ALLEDGEDLY, MANZOOR APPEALED TO MUJIB TO KNOW THE CHARGES

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AGAINST HIM AND IN FACT TO HAVE OFFICIAL CHARGES FILED

SO THAT HE MIGHT DEFINE HIMSELF. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, PRIME MINISTER AND COMMUNICATION MINISTER MANSOOR ALI, MANZOOR'S SUPERIOR, OPPOSED THE DISMISSAL BECAUSE MANZOOR WAS HANDLING SO MUCH OF THE MINISTRY'S WORK FOR HIM. ALTHOUGH MUJIB IS SAID TO HAVE REASSURED MANZOOR THAT ALL WOULD BE WELL, THE LETTER OF DISMISSAL WAS DELIVERED SOON AFTERWARD. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT THE PRESIDENT'S VIGILANCE COMMITTEE IS NOW LOOKING INTO MANZOOR'S AFFAIRS.

3. COMMENT. AMONG THE CYNICAL, MUJIB'S TIMING OF THE DISMISSAL TO THE OPENING DAY OF TRAINING OF THE DISTRICT GOVERNORS IS SEEN AS A POLITICAL MOVE TO ENSURE THE GOVERNORS DO NOT ABUSE THEIR NEW POWERS. MANZOOR HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING A COMPETENT STATE MINISTER AND HAS NOT BEEN AMONG THOSE POPULARLY REPUTED TO BE CORRUPT. UNTIL THE FACTS OF MANZOOR'S CASE BECOME CLEARER, WE HESITATE TO SEE THIS STEP AS THE LONG AWAITED START OF AN ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN IN EARNEST.
BOSTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CORRUPTION, REMOVAL FROM OFFICE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DACCA03571
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750253-1125
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750726/aaaaaxpk.tel
Line Count: 82
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <21 NOV 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MUJIB FIRES STATE MINISTER FOR CORRUPTION
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BG, (MANZOOR, NURUL ISLAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006